Cole Phillips

Block 1

**Essential Belief Statement**

From growing up in a school system that, to me, hosted every bit of evidence toward being counter-conducive to learning, and then coming to the realization that there are good and bad ways to learn, to teach, and the like, I became determined to inspire my future, prospective students with a sense of opportunity and love. Where I once found hate for all things academic, all things didactic, I now find opportunity and hope to ignite a love for my future students’ futures, and the paths to getting to such futures.

I had never been able to understand the point of education as an adolescent. I had never been able to understand being categorized, or numerically assessed. Teachers guiding me in their directions, rather than my own, made little sense to me, but was pumped into my head daily. It was a virulent environment that I wanted no part of. I failed two required classes for graduation during my senior year of high school, simply because I could not see the point of completing my assignments. As a direct result of two teachers' understanding that I just hadn't discovered myself at that point, I graduated high school.

I attended my freshman year of college reluctantly. I had a professor that I could not bear, whose curriculum consisted, almost exclusively, of memorization and stories from his past. I had a teacher whose personal life I knew nothing about, and whose literature class never once insinuated that we, as students, had the wrong answer. There are seldom wrong answers in learning. It was this stark contrast, between everything I believed was wrong and everything that I'd wanted to believe existed, that opened up my mind to the concept of making sure that future students could come to realize, as I had, that a person should never have to give up on learning. Both teachers were professors of English, and it was then I knew, fully, that I could convey what I felt I needed to most through the beautiful medium of language.

My methods of learning have undoubtedly evolved over my career as a student, and it is my hope that I will be able to dissuade students from falling to likeness of the former bits of my career. I believe my change has allowed for my insight. I find I have come to understand, better than most I know, exactly what it feels like to be on either extreme end of the spectrum that is ‘bad’ to ‘good’ student. It is my hope, similarly, that my students will be able to find such hope from my classes and, in fact, one of my greatest fears is the contrary. One my greatest fears is that my class will be mundane and ultimately uninspiring.

If through a teacher, a student can find a passion, a hope, a career path, or a love, then a teacher has opened doors. If a student can walk away with a host of empirical knowledge or otherwise, then a teacher has opened doors. If a student retains the material held in high-regard throughout the given curriculum, then a teacher has opened doors. But if a teacher can leave a student walking away with an honest opinion of his or her whole self, with love of his or her whole self, and with the knowledge of how to be the best possible version of his or her whole self, then, despite any and all doors - closed or open - a teacher has done their job. Honesty is so important. To be honest is the job of a teacher. If Practicum allows me to expound on such a concept, if Practicum allows me to develop the ability to be wholly honest with my students and myself, then I will have gained what I hope to from the program.